

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6208

S E C R E T SANA 2311

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION JIDDA AUG 19 H/W RPTD FOR ACTION:

S E C R E T SANA 2311

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, YE

SUBJECT: YAR PRESIDENT HAMDI

SUMMARY: IN COURTEST CALL YESTERDAY ON SOVIET CHARGE I HEARD STORY WHICH SOVIETS USING IN SANA RECENTLY ABOUT OPPOSITION TO HAMDI.

1. GUENNADY ILITCHEV IS JUNION FIRST SECRETARY WHO EXPLAINED WITH SOME UNEASINESS THAT AMBASSADOR AND ALL COUNSELORS NOW AWAY, LEAVING HIM IN CHARGE AT TIME WHEN THERE ARE "MANY PROBLEMS" IN EMBASSY.

2. ILITCHEV BEGAN BY SAYING USSR SUPPORTS HAMDI AS A PRO-GRESSIVE, AND FEELS "MILITARY DICTATORSHIP" IS INEVITABLE AND NOT NECESSARILY BAD AT THIS STAGE OF HISTORY OF YEMEN. HOWEVER, ILITCHEV SEES LOOMING YARG CONFLICT WITH TRIBAL LEADERS AND GROWING NUMBERS OF YEMENI POLITICIANS WHOM HAMDI HAS EASED OUT.

3. TO ILLUSTRATE THE POINT, ILITCHEV CITED A SOVIET REPORT THAT ROYALIST PRINCE MOHAMMED BIN HUSSAIN IN SAUDI ARABIA RECENTLY SEND A LETTER TO 15 TRIBAL CHIEFS AND POLITICANS LIKE YAHYA MUTAWAKKIL, OUSTED MININT. REPLIES, SAID ILITCHEV,
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HAD BEEN INTERCEPTED BY YAR, AND SHOWED BROAD DISPOSITION TO

RESIST GROWING POWER OF HAMDI.

4. I SAID I HAD NOT RPT NOT HEARD THIS STORY, BUT I THOUGHT HAMDI HAD STRONG POSITION IN DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS AS WELL AS IM MILITARY, AND THAT BOTH HE AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT HAD FULL AND INDEED UNPRECEDENTED SUPPORT OF SAUDIS.

5. WHILE I DIDN'T SAY SO, STORY SOUNDS LIKE ONE WE HAD FROM YARG ON HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL BASIS. ACCORDING TO OUR ACCOUNT, ABDALLAH BIN HUSSAIN AL-AHMAR CONTACTED MOHAMMED BIN HUSSAIN AND OTHERS TO PLUMB DEPTH OF THEIR WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE AGAINST HAMDI. ABDALLAH, A WILLING IF NOT EXPERT CONSPIRATOR, LEFT ALL THE LETTERS AND REPLIES ON A YAR AIRCRAFT BRINGING HIM BACK FROM SAUDI ARABIA, AND QUITE BY ACCIDENT, THEY FELL INTO HANDS OF YARG. HOW AND WHEN TO USE THESE INCRIMINATING DOCUMENTS AGAINST ABDALLAH--WHO RETURNED FROM A PARLIAMENTARY TRIP TO SYRIA YESTERDAY, INCIDENTALLY--IS QUESTION THAT STILL EXERCISES HAMDI GOVERNMENT. SO FAR, ACCORDING TO AHMED ABDO SAID, THEY HAVE DONE NO MORE THAN TO LET ABDALLAH BIN HUSSAIN KNOW THAT THE PACKAGE IS IN THEIR HANDS.

6. ACCORDING TO OTHER REPORTS RECEIVED BY EMBASSY, ILITCHEV HAD BEEN TELLING PEOPLE THAT HAMDI, BY EASING OUT NUMEROUS STRONG LEADERS, WAS UNWITTINGLY BUILDING HIS OWN OPPOSITION AND, DESPITE THE MIXTURE OF BELIEFS AND BACKGROUNDS, THESE MEN WOULD UNITE WITH TRIBES, CERTAIN ARMY ELEMENTS TRAINED IN USSR AND YAR LEFTISTS. AT SAME TIME, HE IS ALSO RELIABLY REPORTED TO BE DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT GROWING SAUDI INFLUENCE, BOTH HERE AND IN PDRY, AS A THREAT TO SOVIET'S PRESENCE. YESTERDAY, ILITCHEV CITED SOVIET REPORTS OF PDRY CONTACTS WITH SAUDIS AND SAID HE BELIEVED THAT TWO COUNTRIES ARE HEADED TOWARD "DIPLOMAT C RELATIONS."

7. COMMENT: THIS THEORY OF SOVIETS IS NOT COMPLETELY IMPLAUSIBLE. THERE IS OBVIOUSLY A POINT WHEN REMOVING RIVALS WEAKENS A LEADER RATHER THAN STRENGTHENING HIM. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE IN YEMEN WHERE, FOR LAST FEW YEARS, LEADERSHIP HAS HAD A COLLEGIAL CHARACTER WHICH HAMDI WANTS
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TO END AS INDECISIVE AND CORRUPT. THERE ALSO NO RPT NO WAY TO KNOW WHETHER AND TO WHAT EXTEND SOVIETS MIGHT ACT AGAINST HAMDI AND WITH HIS RIVALS TO TRY TO TURN THEORY INTO REALITY. I SUSPECT, ON OTHER HAND, THAT SOVIETS SEE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL HERE (AND MAY FEAR SOMETHING SIMILAR IS IN STORE FOR THEM IN PDRY), AND ARE INDULGING IN WISHFUL THINKING WHEN THEY TALK ABOUT HAMDI'S OPPOSITION.
RANSOM

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